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J3
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A Drama in Three Acts

BY

JOHN STEVEN McGROARTY

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PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

MAUREK.....An Ironmaster
JUDITH.....His daughter
RUDOLPH.....Maurek's half-brother
BABRA.....Rudolph's wife
CARL.....Rudolph's son
OTTO.....A flute player
LISSA.....Otto's daughter
JAN.....A dreamer
NESPIE.....A village dancer
HEGG.....Messenger from Maurek

Peasants, village folk, etc.

JUL 30 1917

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JAN

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

By

John Steven McGroarty

ACT I

SCENE—A spot detached from a village in the imaginary kingdom of Swaria. At left is shown the exterior of the cottage in which live Rudolph, Babra and their son, Carl. It is a cottage typical of the kingdom of Bohemia or any of the Slavic countries. In front of the cottage, where the action takes place, is a rustic table, chairs, and a rustic bench. A simple fence is shown adjoining the corner of the cottage and running out apparently to a country road. This country road is taken up on the back drop and is shown winding off to right, is hidden, and then climbs across a great Green Hill which is the background of the scene. This Green Hill should be painted so as to show distance, with trees and shrubbery. The painting of the drop should be so executed as to meet with the wings and to make a complete picture of illusion after the manner of the old cyclorama of Gettysburg and similar arrangements.

DISCOVERED AT RISE—At rise of curtain Rudolph and Babra are discovered seated at either side of the table. Babra is engaged at knitting. Rudolph smokes a long pipe, characteristic of the country in which he lives. They are both dressed in peasant costumes for out of doors, as the day is warm and sunny.

TIME—The first year of the Twentieth Century.

Rudolph

(Takes well-thumbed letter from inside pocket of his jacket and placing it on table goes over it laboriously, following the words with his forefinger. Then looks up at Babra importantly)

Well, old Babra, you can put your knitting away now. You will have no more of that to do.

Babra

Do you mean to say that I am not to knit any more?

Rudolph

That's it, Babra.

Babra

But why, Rudolph? Am I to sit idle?

Rudolph

Why, yes. of course, Babra. You are to be a grand lady now. And grand ladies do not knit, nor bake, nor wash, nor scrub.

Babra

Then, what is it they do,

Rudolph

They do nothing but sleep late, dress in fine clothes, go out and take the air in a grand coach, and sit down to big dinners with wine to drink and servants to wait upon them.

Babra

(Lays her knitting in her lap and stares painfully into vacancy) Oh, I can never be like that, Rudolph. It would kill me.

Rudolph

Nonsense, woman. Why, you will be like the rest of them in no time.

Babra

No, never.

Rudolph

Babra, you should be very thankful for the good fortune that has come to us. All your life you have been like a slave, both in your father's house and in mine. You have known nothing but drudgery. Now you are to cast that all off as a toad casts away its skin.

Babra

But, Rudolph, it has not been drudgery. And I have been very happy, and the Lord has been very good to me. I do not want to change anything about it. I want to stay here and let life go on as it has always gone for me and for you.

Rudolph

You must be mad, Babra. As for me, I am now a very happy man.

Babra

But have you not always been so, Rudolph?

Rudolph

No.

Babra

I have never heard you complain.

Rudolph

(Grandly)

Ah, that is because I have been a very brave man—and a very deep man, Babra. And, besides, I have been a patient man. I knew that, at last, my time would come.

(Folds letter, rises, holds letter in one hand and taps it significantly with the back of other hand)

And now my time is here. It is all in this letter, as I knew it would be.

Babra

All that I can see in the letter is that our boy is to be taken away from us.

Rudolph

(Angrily)

Babra, you are the most stupid of women. I never knew before that you were so stupid. Must I explain everything to you again, although I have already done so a thousand times?

Babra

(Sighing)

If there be any gladness in the letter I wish I could see it. I have seen in it nothing but fear and sorrow.

Rudolph

(Impatiently)

No man can be a great man who has a woman tied to him. The reason Maurek became such a great man is that he has had no wife since he was young.

Babra

Perhaps that is why he is so cruel. Why does he want to take our boy away from us?

Rudolph

Now, stupid woman, I will for the last time explain the matter to you. Listen to me and do not let your thoughts wander. Don't you dare to touch that knitting while I am speaking to you. Are you ready to listen?

Babra

Yes—go on.

(Involuntarily and by force of habit picks up her knitting)

Rudolph

(In a rage)

Put down that knitting.

Babra

(Resignedly puts knitting down)

Yes—go on.

Rudolph

Well, as I have told you a thousand times, this letter is from Maurek, the great Ironmaster, my half-brother, who is known in all the nations because he makes the wonderful guns that have made our kings conquerors over our enemies.

Babra

But who are they, our enemies?

Rudolph

Why, everybody is our enemy.

Babra

Why?

Rudolph

Er—er—because—because—
(Strikes the table angrily)
This is something for men to deal with. Women should keep their noses out of men's affairs.

Babra

But I do not want to lose Carl, our son—our only son.

Rudolph

Lose our boy! Have I not told you that we are not to lose him?

Babra

But Maurek says in the letter that he wants to take him from here and put him in his office in that great, big world yonder across our Green Hill.

Rudolph

Now listen, Babra. Maurek is my half-brother. He has become a great man in the world—a rich man, a powerful man, Babra. He is growing old and has no son of his own to take his place. So, naturally, he thinks of me and wants me to send my boy to him to be the staff on which he can lean. Would you want me to refuse to help my brother Maurek?

Babra

But in all these years he did not seem to know that we were even living. He has paid no attention to us till now.

Rudolph

No—that was because he did not need me till now.

Babra

But you often needed him when the crops were bad and we were very poor.

Rudolph

Maurek did not know that we were poor.

Babra

He never took the trouble to find out. But now that he needs a man to take his place and to lean upon he comes to rob us of our only son.

Rudolph

He wants someone of his own blood—someone he can trust. Does he not say so in his letter?

Babra

(Stubbornly)

I want to keep my boy and I want to stay here where we have always been.

Rudolph

Yes, and slave away the few years that we have left, as we have slaved the years that went before. You are a very strange creature, Babra. Here is Maurek, my half-brother—the great, rich, powerful Maurek—who offers to make our boy, Carl, his successor, and to make him even greater and richer and more powerful than Maurek is himself. And yet you would stand in the way.

Babra

But, oh, it is not for the best, Rudolph. I have talked with Jan about it, and Jan says we would better keep Carl at home.

Rudolph

(Contemptuously)

Jan—Jan, the rolling stone—the tramp. Of course Jan says this. He would have everybody an idler like himself.

Babra

Jan is not an idler. When he comes he works for us and for everybody whose bread he eats. And Jan says that the world beyond the Green Hill is a wicked place. He says it is a place that kills men's souls.

Rudolph

He does say so, eh? Little he knows about it.

Babra

Jan knows all about it. He has traveled everywhere and has seen everything, and he knows what is in books, because he reads so many of them.

Rudolph

I will have none of this interference from this good-for-nothing fellow, Jan. Yonder he is coming now. I shall call him and teach him to mind his own business.

(Motioning to the distance, he crosses stage and shouts)

Jan! Come here, fellow.

(ENTER JAN. He carries rake over his shoulder and book under his arm)

Jan

You called me, Rudolph?

Rudolph

(Angrily)

Yes, I called you. I'd like to know why you stick your nose in other people's affairs.

Jan

(Smiling patiently)

Why—have I been doing that, Rudolph?

Rudolph

Yes, you have been doing just that. What is this nonsense you have been talking to Babra?

Babra

(As Jan turns to her wonderingly)
I have been telling him that you said our boy, Carl, were better at home among his own people than in the big, wicked world beyond the Green Hill.

Rudolph

(Angrily, to Jan)
Did you say that?

Jan

(Quietly and smilingly)
Yes, I said that.

Rudolph

And why did you say it?

Jan

Because it is true.

Rudolph

I suppose it is true with the kind of people that you meet when you are there—tramps like yourself. But, I would have you know that my boy, Carl, is not going out there to be a tramp. My boy, Carl, is to be the pupil and the successor of Maurek, the great Ironmaster.

Jan

Which makes the matter worse. Far better that he were to be even a tramp, as you say, than to be what Maurek will make of him.

Rudolph

What do you know about Maurek?

Jan

Well, the saying is that a cat may look at a king. I have seen Maurek often, and I know what he does.

Rudolph

Then if you know, let me ask you if Maurek is not rich?

Jan

Yes.

Rudolph

And great, and powerful?

Jan

Yes, Rudolph.

Rudolph

Would you, then, ask more than that?

Jan

(Indulgently)
Sit down and I will tell you what I have told Babra.

Rudolph

But it is none of your business.

Jan

Have we not been friends all our lives, Rudolph?

Rudolph

I need no one's advice now. The matter is very plain. Here we are, poor people, and now Maurek, the great Ironmaster, is to take us out of our poverty and away from this dull life of drudgery.

Jan

This might all be very well, Rudolph, if you did not have to pay so great a price for it.

Rudolph

Price! Man, are you out of your mind? There is no price.

Jan

Ah, but there is. And it is too much to pay.

Rudolph

What is the price, then?

Jan

The price of your own peace and contentment, the happiness of Babra, your wife, and almost surely the price of the very soul of Carl, your son.

Rudolph

Jan, you are a madman. Go out of my sight. I will listen to you no longer.
(Rudolph rises wrathfully. Babra with deep anxiety clutches at his hand)

Babra

Sit down, Rudolph. Oh, please, please listen to Jan.

Jan

Yes, Rudolph, listen to me—just this once. It is because of my love for you and yours that I would have you listen.

Rudolph

(Sitting down reluctantly)
Well, say what you have to say quickly and have done with it. The day is wearing away and Maurek will be here soon with Judith, his daughter, to take Carl with them to the great city. And we are to follow—Babra and I—and live in a grand house and wear fine clothes. And yet you would not have us welcome our good fortune.

Jan

Forgive me, if I seem too much concerned about you. Your house has often been my home. Often it has been the only home I had.

Babra

It is true, Rudolph. Jan is our friend. He is like one of our own. Tell him what Maurek says in his letter about Judith, his daughter.

Rudolph

No, I will not. It is none of Jan's business.

Babra

(Turning to Jan)
He has not even told Carl about the plan that Maurek has for his daughter.

Jan

(Rises excitedly)
Tell me, Rudolph.

Rudolph

(Boisterously. Takes letter from pocket of his jacket)
Well, I will tell you, then, so that you will know how complete is the good fortune that awaits us. Why, Maurek has even gone so far as to say that my son, Carl, shall marry Judith, his daughter.

Jan

(Starts back as if in horror, exclaiming)
What!

Babra

(Lifts her apron to her eyes as if weeping)
Yes, Jan, that is what they mean to do.

Jan

Why, Rudolph, surely you do not mean that you will agree to this? It would be a crime.

Rudolph

(Vehemently)
A crime—for my son to marry the daughter of one of the richest and most powerful men in the world? Surely, Jan, there was never a March hare so mad as you. Man, have you no reason left?

Jan

Would you break the heart of Lissa, old Otto's daughter—Lissa, who has been Carl's sweetheart since childhood and who is now his promised wife?

Rudolph

(Brutally)
These things must not stand in the way of our good fortune.

Jan

Ah, Rudolph, you are more than half-brother to Maurek—you are his other self. The iron has entered your soul and you are ready to

trample on everything—even to human hearts if they stand in your way.

Rudolph

Lissa may find someone else for a husband.

Jan

With her broken heart?

Rudolph

I am tired of your nonsense, Jan. My son is to be one of the great men of the world. Do you suppose, then, that he could have for a wife this simple, country girl, Lissa, daughter of crazy old Otto, the flute player of the village? Bah, it is drivel that you speak. You are a driveler, Jan—a mad driveler with an empty pate.

Jan

Is not Carl, your son, now clean and happy and a noble hearted boy?

Rudolph

The best in the world. That is why Maurek wants him.

Jan

Would you not have him still clean and happy and noble hearted when he is a man?

Rudolph

Why, yes, of course.

Jan

Then leave him here.

Rudolph

To be a clodhopper all his life as I have been?

Jan

But he will be honest and he will be happy.

Rudolph

The more so if he be rich and powerful.

Jan

Rudolph, I know that world well into which you are sending your boy. It is a foul and cruel place. Corruption eats at the very core of it. Maurek's business is a business of destruction. He makes iron wheels that grind men into dust. He makes guns that slay and kill and wound and maim. It is a life that will kill your boy's soul. Keep him here, Rudolph, amid the simple country things, with his feet in the dewy grass and the sweat of honest toil upon his brow.

Babra

(Weeping)
Oh, Rudolph, Jan is right. Let us keep our boy.
(ENTER OTTO)

Jan

(Seeing Otto approach)
Ah, here is Otto—Otto of the sweet flute.
(Turns to Rudolph)
See, Rudolph, here is Otto, old friend and neighbor.
(To Otto)
Where is Lissa, Otto?

Otto

She is walking with Carl in the meadows.

Jan

Yes, they are always together—those two.

Babra

They have always been together since they were little children. But now—now—alas, Otto, what are we to do?

Otto

What are we to do? Why is there anything wrong?

Jan

(Turing to Rudolph)
Now Rudolph, speak up like a man.

Rudolph

Yes, I will speak up like a man.
(To Otto)
Otto, you might as well know that all this foolishness about my boy and your daughter must come to an end. My boy, Carl, is going away to be a great man.

Otto

Yes—I know, Rudolph. But is he not to come back some day for Lissa, my little daughter?

Rudolph

No. Put that out of your head, Otto. It was all very well at first, but it is different now. All things are to be changed. I am going away, myself, and Babra with me. We, too, are to enter upon a new life.

Otto

(Pleadingly)
But, Rudolph—old friend—you would not break the hearts of this boy and girl, would you?

Babra

Yes, it will break their hearts—and mine.

Rudolph

(In great anger)
Must I be driven mad with all this silly talk? Have done with it—all of you. I will hear no more of it.
(Turning to Babra)

Come into the house, woman, and let us prepare to meet Maurek and Judith, his daughter. They will be here at any moment.

(Turns to Otto and Jan with violent gestures)

Away with you—meddlers, empty-heads—away with you, and let me hear no more of your silly babble.

(To Babra)

Come into the house, I say, and prepare yourself to make a good appearance before my great relatives.

(EXIT RUDOLPH into the HOUSE. Babra follows dejectedly. EXIT BABRA)

(Otto sinks to seat on rustic bench, burying his head in his arms and weeping)

Jan

(Crosses pityingly to Otto, placing his hand gently on Otto's bowed head)

Lift up your head, Otto. It may turn out all right, after all.

Otto

(Raising his head slowly)

Alas, Jan, you are a wise man, but this trouble is too deep for us all.

Jan

(Sinking on other end of bench from Otto, smilingly)

The battle is not to the strong alone. Do not lose hope, Otto.

Otto

(Childishly)

Is there any hope, then, Jan?

Jan

There is always hope. We shall match our blades of grass against their blades of steel.

Otto

(Wonderingly)

Why—why—is there some deep meaning in the words you speak, Jan?

Jan

Perhaps there is, but do not bother your head about it, Otto.

Otto

(Eagerly)

Oh, Jan, you are wise and cunning. You will not let them break poor little Lissa's heart?

Jan

Not if I can help it. Just be of good cheer, and be sure that I will do the best I can.

Otto

(Displaying childishness as he rises)

You make me glad again, O Jan of the wandering feet.

(Takes flute from his pocket and fits it together)

Now I will play for you upon the flute, Jan, because you have made me happy again.

Jan

(Smilingly)
Not now, Otto,—not now.

Otto

But you have always loved to hear me play upon the flute?

Jan

Oh, yes, everybody loves to hear you play, but there is a time for all things.

(Jan turns laughing toward the house)

Your old friend, Rudolph, would not perhaps care for your music today. But we will hope that he may yet regain his love for the old things that he seems to have lost.

(Jan looks suddenly across at the distance)

And anyway, here comes Carl and Lissa. Do not let them see any sadness on your face, Otto. Appear to be glad and of good cheer. Let things take their way, and, most of all, be sure that you keep a quiet tongue in your head.

Otto

(Looking also in the distance)

Oh, Jan, do they not make a pretty picture? I have watched them grow up thus, with their arms about each other since their childhood.

Jan

(Patting Otto affectionately on shoulder)
Remember, Otto,—a cheerful face and a quiet tongue.

(ENTER CARL and LISSA)

(Jan and Otto are unobserved by Carl and Lissa)

Carl

When we walk again like this, Lissa, I shall have become a great man and you will be very proud of me.

Lissa

I was always proud of you, Carl. I do not want you to be a great man.

Carl

But think of all the rich gowns you will have to wear and the shining coach in which you shall ride when I come back to you.

Lissa

I would rather remain here and be as I am, and have you as you are.

Carl

You will change your mind about all that. I want the world to be proud of you, too.

Lissa

But Jan says that the great world beyond our Green Hill is a sordid and a selfish place where men forget.

Carl

Jan—Jan—always Jan with everybody here. Jan likes the quiet places. He would rather sit under a tree beside the river with a book than be the captain of an army.

Lissa

I would be happier if you were like that,—like Jan.

Carl

But Jan is a wanderer. Would you wish me to be a wanderer?

Lissa

No, but Jan always comes back no matter how far he wanders.

Carl

And so I shall come back also—for you, Lissa.

Lissa

And you are sure you will not forget?

Carl

You know I can never forget you, Lissa. In a year I shall come back for you.

Lissa

A year is so long.

Carl

It will pass like a day.

Lissa

To you—yes—in your new life in the busy places with the roar of the city and the great iron wheels in your ears. But to me it will be long, oh, so long.

Carl

Every morning you will sing a song for me, and at night you will sing another. Do you promise?

Lissa

Yes, oh, yes.

(Lissa looks up startledly and Carl turns with her, perceiving Jan and Otto)

Otto

Come, little daughter, come and prepare yourself to bid Carl farewell. Be not sad or cast down. It is as Carl says—he will come back for you and you shall be happy again together as you have always been.

(Turns to Jan)

Is it not so, Jan?

Jan

Oh, surely. You must not be selfish, little Lissa. Carl is going out into the great world to make his fortune.

Lissa

But I have heard you say, Jan, that the world is a hard, hard place. And Carl is going alone with no one to care for him there.

(Then with sudden eagerness and in a flush of hope Lissa's face lights up)

Oh, Jan, if you would but go with him.

Jan

(Smiling)

That is what I would gladly do.

Lissa

(Turning to Carl excitedly)

Carl, Carl—you must take Jan with you. He knows that great world into which you are going. He loves you and loves us all.

He will care for you, Carl—oh, please, please take Jan with you.

Carl

(Hesitatingly)

I do not know—perhaps it would not be permitted.

Lissa

It will be permitted if you insist upon it. Tell them you cannot go unless you can take Jan with you.

Jan

(To Carl)

The question is, Carl, do you wish to have me with you?

Carl

(Turns to Jan frankly and cordially, placing his hand on Jan's shoulder)

Why, yes—of course, old Jan. There is no one else I would like so well to have.

Jan

Then it is an easy matter. Naturally, you must have a servant with you. So, you take me.

Carl

Not as my servant, Jan. Why, how often have I heard you say that you would be servant to no man. You are too proud for that.

Jan

(Solemnly)

But I will be your servant now—if you will take me with you.

Lissa

See, Carl,—he is glad to go. And he need not be your servant, but just your friend—your good, true friend that he has always been.

Jan

Yes, his friend until death—but let us not say that. Let us say that Jan is going with Carl as Carl's servant—just that and nothing more.

Lissa

You will do it, Carl? Promise me—promise me now that you will do it.

Carl

(Taking Lissa's hands)
Yes, I promise.
(Turns to Jan with outstretched hand, laughingly)
But it will be funny to have you as my servant, Jan.

Jan

But I shall be all that—
(Bows profoundly)
your most obedient servant—and more.

Otto

(To Lissa)
Come now, ltte daughter, all is well—come and we will return right soon to say farewell to Carl before he goes.
(EXIT OTTO and LISSA)

Carl

(Clasping Jan's hand)
Jan—dear old Jan—it will be good to have you with me in the strange, new places.

Jan

I will be faithful, never fear. But, lad, you must not wear your heart on your sleeve. You will need me—I am sure of that. But you must be cunning for your own sake. Forget that I am your friend, and treat me always as your servant, else they will not let me be near you.

Carl

Is it that way, Jan—yonder in the great world over the Green Hill?

Jan

Yes—it is that way.
(Jan looks suddenly in the distance. He then turns somewhat excitedly to Carl)
Look, Carl, they are here already. Their coach has just turned the road. It is Maurek—the great Maurek—and, by all the gods, she is with him.

Carl

She?

Jan

Yes, she—Judith, the great Maurek's daughter. I will run to escort them in. Do you remain here, straight up, like a gentleman.

And remember—remember always—that I am Jan, your servant.

(EXIT JAN)

(Carl stands looking eagerly in the distance)

(RE-ENTER, immediately, JAN, obsequiously leading Maurek and Judith, carrying their wraps)

(ENTER MAUREK and JUDITH)

Jan

(Imitating manners of servant)
Here is Mr. Carl, sir—Mr. Carl, waiting for you.

(NOTE: Maurek, as he enters, must show in every movement, the manner of man he is—strong, virile and dominating. He takes in the whole place with swift, keen glances and then brings a searching scrutiny to bear on Carl. Judith must also give evidence of her character in her entrance. She comes in with a haughty, supercilious air. She appears bored and weary with the journey which she has taken. When, at length, she deigns to observe Carl, she does it characteristically by sitting down on the rustic bench, leaning forward with her elbow on her knee and her chin in her hand, and looks Carl over from head to foot. Evidently she is agreeably surprised in Carl's looks and appearance and, straightening herself to an erect posture, she smiles with the air of one who has been agreeably disappointed.)

Maurek

(Sharply)
You are young Carl, the son of my half-brother, Rudolph?

Carl

I am Carl, sir.

Maurek

Yes, yes. I would have known you from the reports. I am glad to think that the reports were very good and correct. We will see to it that they turn out that way.

(Turns to Judith)

This is my daughter, Judith.

(Carl bows in acknowledgment. Judith does not rise nor bow, but continues her inspection of Carl with an insolent stare)

Jan

Shall I take you into the house, sir?

Maurek

(Sharply, to Carl)
Who is this fellow, here?

(Jan, behind Maurek's back, puts finger on his lips to warn Carl)
Why—why—sir, he is—he is—my servant.

Maurek

(With harsh laugh)
So, you have been used to a servant, eh? Brother Rudolph apparently has had some big ideas of his own. Well, that is good. It is a good beginning that you are used to having a servant, for it will

make it easier for you to get used to the army of them that you will have around you from now on. Where are your father and mother?

Carl

They are within the house, sir. Will you come in?

Maurek

No, the air is probably better out here. Have them come out.
(Half turns sharply to Jan)
Bring them out to me.
(Jan involuntarily and evidently in his first moment of forgetfulness, straightens up resentfully at the Ironmaster's tone, but instantly recovers himself)

Jan

Yes sir, yes sir, I shall bring them out at once.
(EXIT JAN to HOUSE)

Maurek

(To Judith)
Judith, if you do not wish to remain here while I am arranging matters finally with Rudolph, you can stroll about the place. There is not much to be said. We shall soon have it over with and be upon our return.

Judith

(Indolently)
I prefer to sit here awhile. If I feel like walking later on, I shall do so. Please do not draw the agony out.
(She turns to Carl)
Come here, and sit with me, won't you?
(RE-ENTER JAN, leading Rudolph and Babra)
(ENTER RUDOLPH and BABRA dressed in their "Sunday Best" peasants' attire)

Rudolph

(Crossing demonstratively to greet Maurek)
Maurek, my beloved brother.
(Rudolph is about to embrace Maurek in his arms but Maurek holds him at arm's length)

Maurek

Yes, yes, Rudolph, I am very glad to see you.
(Turns to Babra)
And this is Babra?
(Babra bows awkward acknowledgment in the way of typical country courtesy)
Well, well, the years make great changes. We must be all the busier for that. Sit down now, Rudolph, and you also, Babra, and we will get rid of the business before us. As soon as it is finished we shall return to the city, taking Carl with us. You and Babra can follow in a day or so. Everything has been made ready for you.
(Maurek, Rudolph and Babra are seated at table)

Rudolph

Shall I not bring you some wine, Maurek? You must be weary after your long journey—you and—and—

(Rudolph and Babra turn their gaze on Judith sitting with Carl on rustic bench)

Maurek

(Impatiently interrupting)

Yes—that is Judith, my daughter.

(Maurek for a moment gazes at Judith and Carl in satisfactory admiration)

Judith, my daughter, and Carl, your son—Rudolph. It is indeed all as I saw it in my imagination. They will make a fine pair, don't you think?

Rudolph

It is a great honor to us, Maurek. Shall I bring you the wine?

Maurek

(Impatiently)

No, no—it will only interrupt us and take up valuable time. We will get down to business.

Rudolph

Yes, Maurek, I am ready.

Maurek

(Taking paper from his coat pocket and unfolding it before Rudolph and Babra on the table)

This is the bond between us. Everything is set forth carefully by my lawyers. This is but an ordinary step. As Carl's father you are to consent to the arrangement between us. And I will agree to my part of the bargain. I made the matter plain to you in my letter. You understand the matter fully. We will go into your house and sign the bond. Is everything plain to you?

Rudolph

Why, yes, Maurek. As I understand, you are to take Carl away with you and make a great man of him. Is not that so?

Maurek

Yes—that's what it amounts to.

(NOTE: During the dialogue between Maurek and Rudolph, Carl and Judith stroll at back, to and fro. Carl animatedly points out the Green Hill and the country to Judith. Judith nods pleasantly and makes it clear by her actions that she is quite taken, indeed, with Carl. Babra sits at the table stolidly in a sort of dumb awe and fear of the great Maurek. Jan stands at a respectful distance as though awaiting orders but intently listening, unobserved, to the dialogue between Maurek and Rudolph)

Rudolph

And you are to take care of Babra and me and we are to live in the city?

Maurek

(Brusquely)
Yes, of course.

Rudolph

You are very generous, brother Maurek.

Maurek

(Coldly)
Now, Rudolph, let us understand each other well. I am doing nothing to be generous. The reason I am taking you and Babra to the city, giving you a house to live in and money for your pockets, is that it is a part of my plan. Carl, at first, might be homesick. That would interfere with his progress. I am taking you to be near him for this reason and for no other.

Rudolph

(Abashed)
Well, it is all the same.

Maurek

I am glad you look upon it sensibly. And, understand, you are to live your own lives there, and in no way to bother me or to take up any of my time. I am too busy to bother with you. You will have no care. Is that not enough for you?

Rudolph

Yes. But why are you doing all this, Maurek?

Maurek

That really does not concern you but I will tell you. I am growing old, as you see. It is not my intention that the house of Maurek shall end with Maurek. Do you know that on the great guns that win battles for victorious kings, there is always the name of "Maurek"?

Rudolph

(In awe)
Yes, so I have heard.

Maurek

It is true. And always the name of Maurek shall be on the guns, and it must be the house of Maurek always. Your son is of my blood to some extent. My daughter, Judith, is of my blood altogether. They shall be mated, these two, and bear children. Carl shall succeed me and, in the course of time, his son shall succeed him—his son who shall be the son of Judith. Then sons shall succeed the sons of Carl and Judith down through the years and through the centuries. And they shall make guns—and always the name of "Maurek" shall be on the guns. Now do you understand?

Rudolph

(Solemnly)
Yes—I understand. But—Maurek—are we not to be at all as brothers yonder in the great world where they hear the crash of your iron wheels and your guns going out to the battles?

Maurek

No. I shall see to it that you keep a still tongue in your head. You will live a life of ease—you and Babra. And your son I shall make to be one of the great men of the world—as great, or even greater than Maurek himself. Man, do you ask more than that?

Rudolph

(Humbly)
No—no, Maurek. It is more than I ever dreamed of.

Maurek

(Rising and folding bond)
It is well. Let us go into the house, then, and sign the bond.

(EXIT into the HOUSE, MAUREK and RUDOLPH)

(Babra rises in a dazed way, crosses to rustic bench where she is seated, weeping)

(Carl crosses and sits with Babra in an attempt to comfort her)

(Jan crosses to house and stands outside at doorway)

(Judith observes Carl and Babra with mocking smile on her lips)

(RE-ENTER OTTO. ENTER LISSA and bevy of VILLAGE YOUNG FOLK gathered about LISSA as though to comfort her as she walks with bowed head. Carl crosses to Lissa, putting his arms about her. Otto crosses to Jan)

Jan

(Nodding knowingly to Otto, then crossing impulsively to Carl, [illegible] and bevy of village young folk)

Ho, you young folks. You make me think of a funeral. This will never do. We must not send Carl away with tears in his eyes. Come, Otto, let us have some music, and let us have some dancing. The birds are happy and so are we. Come, Lissa, let us see you dance with Carl again, and all the village young folk to dance with you. Now, Otto, strike up the tune. It is better to be dancing than to be weeping.

(Otto begins upon his flute one of Dvorak's "Slavonic Dances." The theatre orchestra quickly takes up the music and plays the melody with Otto. Carl smiles at Lissa who smiles back at him again. The village young folk array themselves and the dance is on. During the dance Babra seems to regain some of her old cheerfulness. Jan is alive with enthusiasm. Judith stands aloof, half-sneering at the performance)

(RE-ENTER from the HOUSE, MAUREK and RUDOLPH as dance is finished)

Maurek

(To Jan)
Is the coach waiting?

Jan

Yes sir, it is all in readiness.

Maurek

Is Carl ready for the journey, and are you ready with him?

Jan

We are all in readiness, sir.

(Jan picks up wraps of Maurek and Judith that he had brought in at beginning, together with traveling bag for Carl which Rudolph hands to him)

Rudolph

(To Maurek)

We will go with you to see you off on the coach, Maurek.

(EXIT MAUREK, also RUDOLPH and BABRA, who go as though to accompany him to the coach)

(Jan and Judith wait for Carl. Carl crosses to Lissa)

Carl

Sing me the farewell song, Lissa, that I may have it with me in my heart till I come back to you again. Sing, Lissa.

(Otto strikes up obligato of the farewell song (Lebewohl) on the flute and Lissa sings. At conclusion of song, Carl folds Lissa in his arms in impassioned farewell embrace, then rushes quickly away)

(EXIT CARL)

(EXIT JAN and VILLAGE YOUNG FOLK)

(EXIT JUDITH, who stands in sneering contemplation of Lissa, tossing her head as she goes)

(Otto stands with bowed head, Lissa sinks to table, burying her head in her arms)

(CURTAIN)

ACT II.

SCENE—The scene of Act II is the great office of the Ironmaster at his foundries and factories on the other side of the Green Hill. The set shows the interior of the great office. For a model see the book entitled "The Story of Bohemia" by C. Edmond Maurice, on page 468. This picture will give an idea of the kind of interior desired and also the kind of table and chairs to be used. The window at back of set almost the same as in the picture referred to. On table a model of modern machine gun or cannon. On the wall to left of table specimens of ancient weapons of warfare, such as crossbow, pike, etc. For picture of these weapons see "History of Bohemia" by Vickers, page 438. Costumes to be adapted from books above referred to.

AT RISE—Jan is discovered at rise, seated in a chair reading a book.

TIME—One year after Act I.

(ENTER HEGG. He carries mail and bundles of maps and plans which he deposits on table)

Jan

(Looking up lazily at Hegg)
Good morning, Hegg.
(Resumes reading)

Hegg

(With bow and studied sarcasm)
Good morning, your Lordship. I trust your Lordship enjoys yourself.

Jan

(Closes book with finger in it. Surveys Hegg amusedly but kindly)
I always find much enjoyment in myself, Hegg—and in a book.

Hegg

You are a strange fellow—a servant with the airs of an idler.

Jan

It is one thing to serve and another thing to be servile. It is all in a man's mind. They can chain a man's legs in the galleys, but no power on earth can chain his thoughts.

Hegg

(Starts to leave)
I don't know what you're talking about.

Jan

Sit down awhile, and we'll talk about something else.

Hegg

(Uneasily)
Oh, no. I must not do that. We might be caught at it.

Jan

Man, do you always live in this chronic state of fear?

Hegg

Suppose someone comes in and finds us like this—loafing?

Jan

Suppose someone does. Is that a crime? Have not you and I the right to talk with one another?

Hegg

We would be discharged. We would be sent away.

Jan

(Acquiescently)
Yes—that's so.
(Rises, turning to Hegg)
Now, Hegg, what would you do if you were sent away from here—discharged?

Hegg

(Horrified)
What would I do? Don't speak of it. I would not know what to do. I would starve.

Jan

How long have you been here—in Maurek's great iron works?

Hegg

Ever since I was a little boy—all my life.

Jan

All your life. Why, I have been here only a year—just one little year—and I am already about to go to pieces. It is a crazy place—a madhouse.

Hegg

(In fright)
Hush. Someone may hear you.
(Starts again to go)
I must go.

Jan

Wait a minute, Hegg. Wait a minute.

Hegg

No—I am afraid we will be caught.

Jan

Don't be a coward. A coward dies a thousand deaths. Get it out of you.
(Gently)
Hegg, do you know it is Springtime?

Hegg

I—I suppose it is, sir.
(Stammers)
I—I—didn't mean to call you "sir".

Jan

(Laughing)
Thank you. You are a good friend of mine. I'm sure you would not knowingly hurt my feelings. But let that pass. Do you know it is Springtime, Hegg? Do you know that the fields are green again and that the blossoms are on the trees? And that away out yonder in the valley, the blue birds are singing?

Hegg

(Looking furtively toward door)
I—I suppose so.

Jan

Man, don't you feel it in your blood?

Hegg

No—but I feel it in my bones that we shall be caught.

Jan

It might as well be now as some other time. For you will be caught sometime, Hegg—as sure as you live.

Hegg

(With increased fright)
I must be going.

Jan

Just a minute more, and I'll let you go. It is Springtime, Hegg. Somehow, in some way, you must steal away from this roar and soot and smoke and din, and go out into the country if only for a day.

Hegg

(Lifts hands in horror)
Oh, I can never do that.

Jan

Yes, you can. And if you are wise you will never come back.

Hegg

I would starve.

Jan

Not there—in the country. But here—yes, just as surely as you stay. Your soul is already starved, and next it will be your body.

Hegg

What do I know about the country? I would die of loneliness there.

Jan

The country lonely! Why, man, it is the most sociable and the blithest place on earth. Have you ever spent a day with the bees?

Hegg

No—thank you. I have no desire to get any closer to a bee than I am now. I shudder when I think of bees—and—and all those other bugs.

Jan

Heaven pity you—and such as you. No wonder it is easy for kings to rule with cities filled with helpless men like you.

Hegg

Why, now, that's going pretty far, isn't it?
(Smugly)
I don't know that a man can ask anything better than a good job in a city.

Jan

Yes, if he is that kind of a man—willing to eat out of another man's hand, and dependent always on the whim of the other man. Maurek might take a notion to close down his works tomorrow, or the gun business might go bad, and then where would you be?

Hegg

(Uneasily)
Are you an anarchist—or—or a socialist—or something dangerous like that?

Jan

(Laughing)
No—far from it.

Hegg

You talk like them.

Jan

Have you heard them talk?

Hegg

Yes, on street corners. And I've seen the police club them, too.

Jan

Well, there's different kinds of crazy people in the world. Anarchists are one kind, socialists another, policemen and the man who insists on policemen, is another. Then comes men like you—and there are still many other kinds.

Hegg

If all this that you say be true, what makes it so?

Jan

Cities—cities, Hegg.

Hegg

Nobody crazy in the country?

Jan

I don't find them there. It is only when I come to the city I find them. The man who sweats over his nine bean rows and his scythe in the grass is too healthy to go crazy.

Hegg

Oh, I suppose that kind of a life is all very well for some people.

Jan

They are the people who feed you, Hegg.

Hegg

Oh, no. It is Maurek who feeds me.

Jan

Can you eat iron? Maurek makes iron.

Hegg

(Again alarmed)
I tell you, someone will hear us. I must go.
(Rises)

Jan

Don't be a coward, Hegg. Listen to me. Get away from here. Go out into the country and let your old mother, the good warm Earth, take you to her bosom. Set up your nine bean rows and a hive for the honey bee.

Hegg

There you go about those bees again.
(Shudders)

Jan

(Smiling)
You could not have better friends.

Hegg

It's hard work—that farming.

Jan

Yes, but, as someone has said, "Work is, after all, the great adventure." Man, have you no sporting blood in your veins? The city has bleached you to a rag.

Hegg

Why do you talk to me like this?

Jan

Because I like you, Hegg. And because you are a poor devil of a slave and I would like to set you free.
(Knock heard at door)

Hegg

There! I told you so. We are caught.

Jan

(Smiling)

Stand there against the wall. When whoever it is comes in, you slip out.

(Crosses to door)

(ENTER OTTO, carrying bundle under his arm)

(EXIT HEGG)

Jan

(Hardly able to believe his eyes)

Otto! As I live it is really you—dear old Otto in the living flesh all the way from the dewy meadows beyond the Green Hill.

(Embraces Otto affectionately)

By what magic did you find your way so far from home, Otto? Come, come, tell me.

Otto

It was a far journey, Jan, and I thought I would never reach the place.

Jan

But you did reach it. Oh, you are a great traveler, Otto, and a brave man.

Otto

No, I am not a brave man. I was very much afraid.

Jan

Did you see any ghosts?

Otto

I think I did.

Jan

The ghosts are not the worst things one meets.

Otto

The worst was when I reached this roaring, noisy, crazy town. I was afraid everything would run over me, Jan, and that the terrible policemen with their big, brass buttons would put me in prison.

Jan

(Laughing)

Put you in prison, Otto? Why, what for?

Otto

I do not know what for except that they might know I ran away from home.

Jan

Did you have to run away?

Otto

(Solemnly)
To be sure. Do you think they would let me come if they had known it?

Jan

(Laughing still more gayly)
I guess that's right, Otto, you are still a child. And so you got here at last.

Otto

Yes, and the darkness was upon me at the end. But a kind, old man told me the way to Maurek's iron gates and I sat there until now.

Jan

It is by some miracle that you got in at all, let alone that you were able even to make your way right here into Carl's office.

Otto

(Looking around the room wonderingly)
Is this Carl's office?

Jan

Yes, this is the place.

Otto

(Looks again wonderingly around room. Goes over to wall and points to crossbow)
Is this what Carl goes hunting with?

Jan

(Smiling)
Oh, no. It is many a year since any man went hunting with a thing like that. Besides, did you ever know Carl to hunt for anything to kill it?

Otto

No—that's so. He never killed even a bird.
(Suddenly, in hushed voice)
And, oh, Jan, do you remember Carl's bird that lived in his room with him at home?

Jan

Yes, the little brown thrush that Lissa taught to whistle the tunes?

Otto

Yes—

Jan

I remember, one time, Carl set the bird free from his window and it soared away up into the blue of heaven whistling the farewell song that Lissa taught it.

Otto

Yes, but you know it came back to Carl again. It would rather be with him than be free.

Jan

Yes—I remember.

Otto

But, oh, Jan, the bird is dead. It was lonely for Carl. We said it died of a broken heart. All the people said it was a bad sign.

Jan

(Solemnly)
You must not tell Carl of this.

Otto

(Eagerly)
Where is he? Can I see him now?

Jan

(Again laughing gently)
Why, no—not yet. But you will see him before you go. I will take care of that.

Otto

Oh, Jan, it was the saints that sent me to you.

Jan

Then—the saints be praised. But, come now, what is the news from home, and what is it that brings Otto, the flute player, on so far a journey?

Otto

Well, Jan, it was for Lissa—she is very sad and heartbroken.

Jan

Did Lissa send you?

Otto

Oh, no. She does not even know that I have come. I ran away.

Jan

Has Lissa lost faith in us?

Otto

No—I think it is not that, Jan, but you see it is a whole year now since Carl left us, and there is no word from him, and we are very much grieved and worried because of that.

Jan

And so you sallied forth, brave old Otto, and set your foot upon strange pathways for the first time in all the long, glad years.

Otto

I thought maybe I could see Carl and bring back some news.

Jan

And so you shall see him. Surely, indeed, it was the saints that sent you. You have not come a day too soon.

Otto

(Eagerly)
Will he soon be here?

Jan

Yes, but there will be others with him, and they must not find you here. You will do as I tell you, Otto?

Otto

Yes, Jan, I will do just as you say.

Jan

(Tapping bundle under Otto's arm)
What have you here? The package is too big for your flute.

Otto

It is a gift for Carl, Jan.

Jan

(Excitedly)
And you came away without your flute?

Otto

Oh, no, my flute goes wherever I go, always.

Jan

But it never went with you on a journey so far as this. Are you sure you have your flute with you, Otto?

Otto

(Taking flute from inside pocket of his jacket)
Surely. Here it is. Do you wish me to play for you?

Jan

A flute playing in this place! Oh, no, it would bring the guards down upon us.

Otto

(Startled)
The guards!

Jan

(Taking flute from Otto and putting it very carefully back in Otto's pocket)
Be not afraid. But whatever happens to you this day, Otto, do not, above all things, lose your flute.
(Impressively)
This is very, very important, Otto. You will remember?

Otto

Of course. What would I do without my flute?

Jan

What, indeed? And today above all days. And now what is this that you have here as a gift for Carl? Leave it with me and I will give it to him.

Otto

(Anxiously)
Am I not to see him?

Jan

Yes, but that will be later when I call you from the place where I am to hide you. Leave the bundle with me.

(Otto opens bundle and takes out sprays of peach blossoms)

(Jan takes up blossoms in an ecstasy of delight)

Peach blossoms from the orchards at home—soul of the Springtime from the dear lost hillsides. Oh, Otto, how wonderful is the strength of the weak. You have come with mighty weapons in your hands. Let us pray God that they be stronger than Maurek's guns.

(Jan excitedly takes vase from bracket on wall, places it on table and arrays peach blossoms in vase as a bouquet. He is fairly beside himself with gladness)

Oh, blossoms of Springtime—soul of God's green country in the sordid, soulless town.

(Puts his face into the blossoms and inhales their perfume in his nostrils, while Otto looks upon him wonderingly)

Otto

Why, Jan, had I known they would please you so much I would have brought some also for you.

Jan

These will do for me, Otto. I have had my joy of them already.

(Jan suddenly crosses in a startled way to door, listens intently, and then returns to Otto)

Everything is already astir. I must hide you now.

(Takes Otto by arm and leads him to Back at open window. Points to outside)

You see that great, large clump of shrubbery just over there?

Otto

Yes, I see it plainly.

Jan

Now, you must slip out of this window and hide yourself there. It may be hours before I call you, but you must wait patiently. Remember, if they find you they will drive you from the place and then it may be impossible for you to see Carl. Be very quiet and very patient in your hiding place, so that no one may find you. Do you understand?

Otto

Yes, yes, Jan, I shall do just as you say.

(EXIT OTTO)

(Jan crosses to door, draws bolt and returns to table and blossoms)

(ENTER CARL and JUDITH. They are dressed in riding clothes, apparently having just returned from a morning ride. Carl crosses anxiously to table not noticing blossoms, runs his hand rapidly over pile of mail and drawings that have been deposited there awaiting his arrival)

Judith

(To Jan)
You will remember to have your Master leave this office promptly at five o'clock, and that he is to dress and then call for me.

Jan

(Obsequiously)
Yes, Miss.

Judith

(Mockingly)
"Yes, Miss!" You make a great show of your hypocrisy—Mister Jan.

Jan

I try to be humble, Miss.

Judith

But you do not succeed. You need to be taught a lesson.

Jan

I have had many, Miss.

Judith

Now, I call that impertinence.
(Crosses angrily to Carl's table and beats it with her riding whip. Turns to Carl)
This gypsy you brought with you has become intolerable.

Carl

(Looking up wearily)
Let Jan alone, Judith. He is my servant.

Judith

He is also my servant—and everybody else.

Carl

Can't you let him alone. What has he done to displease you?

Judith

He does everything to displease me. He has the airs of an autocrat.

Carl

What! Poor, lovable, simple Jan?

Judith

(Sneeringly)
Oh, indeed! He is something to remind you of the pigs and the smelly people you left behind you, eh?

Carl

(Rising angrily)
JUDITH!

Judith

(Laughs mockingly)
Oh, don't try to be dramatic with me. This fellow must be taught manners or he must be sent away.

Carl

(Dismayed. Turns to Jan)
Jan, have you not tried to please Judith?

Jan

(Submissively)
In every way, Master.

Judith

(Ironically)
"Master." How nicely he says it—here. But, when backs are turned, then what?

Carl

(Sitting wearily)
Judith, you are very unreasonable.

Judith

It is not for you to tell me what I am, or what I am not. You are not my master.

Carl

Nor do I care to be.

Judith

Then, it is well for you, for you will have no illusions when we are married.

Carl

(Gesture of wearied submission to his fate)
I must get at my work.

Judith

Not yet. I told you that this fellow must be taught to know his place. Since you fail to do it, I will do it for you.
(Turns to Jan)
Come here, Mister Highfeather.

Jan

(Crosses wonderingly to Judith)
Yes, Miss.

Judith

Get down on your knees and wipe the dust from my shoes.

Jan

(Smiling)
It will be a pleasure.

Judith

(Strikes Jan angrily with her whip)
Did I ask you for a compliment—ragamuffin?

Jan

(Winces. Half starts in anger. Looks at Carl, takes kerchief from his pocket and wipes Judith's shoes, then rises and stands bowed)
Yes, Miss.

Judith

(To Carl)
This is the way to teach a servant.
(Carl looks at Jan pityingly)

Carl

Judith, this is horrible.

Judith

(Turns and catches sight of peach blossoms on table. Then addresses Carl in a great show of anger)
Where did those blossoms come from?

Carl

(Looks up and is aware for the first time of presence of blossoms on his desk. He rises, puts his hand around the sprays, and inhales their fragrance through his nostrils, then stands back in a transport of joy)
Why, look, Jan, here are peach blossoms from our orchard at home. There are none others in the world like them. Who brought them Jan?

Jan

(Wagging his head vaguely)
I could not say, sir.

Judith

(Her wrath rising. Speaks to Jan)
You are lying. You know very well who sent them. But it does not matter. They will not stay here.
(Judith snatches blossoms wrathfully from vase, crosses to window at Back and throws them out, while Carl and Jan look on in helpless pain)
(ENTER RUDOLPH and BABRA. They are almost grotesquely bedecked in brand new attire evidencing their sudden rise to fortune. Rudolph is more of a swaggerer than ever and entirely obsessed with the idea of his present state of grandeur. He makes the usual farcial appearance of a lowly born peasant assuming the preposterous airs of a grand gentleman. Babra appears very miserable and altogether ill at ease in her flashy, expensive gown. Judith remains contemptuously at Back)

Babra

(Crossing anxiously to Carl)
Ah, my poor boy, Carl—how pale and tired you look. You are killing yourself with all this hard work.

Rudolph

(Crossing also to Carl and slapping him on shoulder)
Nonsense. Work never killed a good man yet. Think of it, son,

only a year has passed—one little year—and yet they say that you are already as great a man as Maurek himself.

Babra

We just ran in for our morning's greeting, Carl. You will not mind? It makes the day shorter and easier to bear for me if I can just see you in the morning.

Carl

Yes, mother dear, always do that. Run in to see me in the morning. It makes it easier also for me.
(Salutes her affectionately)

Rudolph

(In his grand, blustering way)
We must be going now, son. I cannot keep myself out of that grand new coach you bought for us. Oh, I tell you, there is nobody grander than we are when we ride down the boulevards. And, I tell you, everybody takes notice of us, too.

Carl

(Smilingly)
I am glad you are happy. Now go out and enjoy the morning air.
(Escorts them affectionately to door)
(EXIT RUDOLPH and BABRA)

Judith

(Crosses from Back to table, sinks into chair and bursts into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, as Carl and Jan regard her wonderingly)
I could almost die with laughter whenever I see those two. They are so very, very funny.
(Laughs again)
Why don't you do something with them?

Carl

(Solemnly)
Do you mean my father and mother?

Judith

(Impatiently)
Yes, of course.
(Laughs again)
Oh, they are surely a sight. Why don't you send them back to the country over the Green Hill and give the folks at home the benefit of the show?

Carl

Judith, you must not speak so of my father and mother.

Judith

(Snaps her fingers angrily)
I will speak of them as I please. And I want you to remember that when we are married you must keep those two old things out of my sight. They would soon get on my nerves.
(She crosses to door, then turns to Jan)

Remember that your Master is to leave here promptly at five o'clock, and that he is to dress and call for me.

(EXIT JUDITH, slamming door behind her)

(As Judith disappears Carl sits at table with head in hands and looks out upon space with unseeing eyes)

Jan

(Crossing softly to Carl)
Is there anything you wish me to do, Master?

Carl

(Turning slowly to Jan)
Jan, why do you call me "Master"?

Jan

(Turns head towards door and indicates with gesture recent departure of Judith)
It is her orders.

Carl

I am not your master, Jan, but your friend, as you are mine. You must not call me "Master" any more.

Jan

Then, they will not let me stay. I shall have to go.

Carl

No, I cannot let you go. And yet, how can I ask you to stay—suffering these horrible indignities.

Jan

(Laughing)
They are indignities only if I choose to so regard them.

Carl

But she made you wipe the very dust from her shoes.

Jan

(Happily)
I would do that for a beggar on the roadside.

Carl

She struck you with her whip and you did not strike back.

Jan

She is a woman.

Carl

You are wonderful, Jan. I would have gone mad here without you. You alone are left of all the old friends that I have lost.

Jan

You have not lost them. They are still true. They speak of you every morning in the sunny fields and at night about their fires.

Carl

How do you know? Have you heard from them?

Jan

I do not need to hear from them. I know their hearts.

Carl

Jan, who was it that sent the peach blossoms?

Jan

(Evasively)

I suppose it was someone beyond the Green Hill—someone among all those who love you there.

Carl

Ah, well, I guess I know.

(Turns to table and dives into the work before him)

(ENTER MAUREK)

(NOTE: Maurek upon his entrance, is a greatly changed man from the stalwart figure that he was made to be in the first act. His step is not so light, his shoulders are bent, his beard is gray and his face pallid. He is not exactly feeble or broken, but he shows unmistakable signs of physical breakdown. His iron will, however, is as strong as ever and his resourceful brain has lost none of its power.

(Upon his entrance in this scene Maurek glances about the room for an instant, letting his eyes and his attention rest upon Jan particularly. He then crosses to Carl who stands up to greet him. Maurek motions Carl to be seated, is then seated himself and unrolls a set of plans which he has carried with him)

Maurek

(Handing plans to Carl)

These are the latest plans of the engineers for the improvements on the new gun. I want you to study them carefully today and let me know what you think.

Carl

I thought the engineers were done with it.

Maurek

We are never done. Always remember this, my lad—that we are never done. The world does not stand still, does it?

Carl

No.

Maurek

Nor does Progress, or human ingenuity. Have you that firmly fixed in your mind?

Carl

Yes.

Maurek

We must always make our guns to be better guns. And we must always strive to see if we can make an altogether different kind of gun that will be more effective than any we have ever made before.

Carl

Our engineers seem to feel this thoroughly.

Maurek

But I want you to feel it more than they can possibly feel, it. There is always the master and the man. The engineer is the man. You must feel and konw that you are the master.

Carl

But it is you, sir, who is the master.

Maurek

Yes—just now, I am the master. And for a while longer, perhaps, I shall be the master. But, the time will come when my hands shall fall idly and my brain shall sink to endless sleep. What then?

Carl

There must be someone then to take your place, if that be possible.

Maurek

It must be possible, and you are the man. When I am gone you shall be Maurek. And when you go you must leave another Maurek bebind you. There must always be a Maurek. Your marriage to Judith must not be delayed another day.

Carl

(Takes up plans)
I shall study the plans carefully, sir.

Maurek

(Almost gently)
You are doing wonderfully well, lad. The ideas that you put into the new gun helped greatly to make it a success.

Carl

And you think it a success?

Maurek

Yes—a great success. I have reports upon it that are very gratifying.

Carl

Reports? From where?

Maurek

Well, you know that the King lately won a great victory.

Carl

Yes, so I have heard.

Maurek

A great victory, indeed—and he has Maurek to thank for it. But the King must pay. And he must create new honors for us—honors that mean more power—not empty honors. If Maurek makes the King a stronger king, the King must pay.

Carl

(Again looking at the plans)
I will study carefully the plans.

Maurek

Let your thoughts be logical from the beginning of things to their completion. Where are those ancient weapons that we had here in this room?

Carl

You mean the crossbow and the pike and those things?

Maurek

Yes, bring them to me.

Carl

(To Jan)
Jan, bring the crossbow and the pike.

Jan

(Taking crossbow and pike from wall of room and crossing to Carl)
Is it these?

Carl

Yes, Jan, thank you.
(To Maurek)
Are these the things you had in mind?

Maurek

Yes. Now look at these things. These are the weapons with which men fought in the olden times. They were very good until someone invented the bunderbuss that shot powder and ball. Then the crossbow and the pike became useless. The side that had the powder and ball became conquerors. Then came the day of guns. And there was always somewhere a gun that was better than another. And the side that had the best became the conqueror.

(Rises and places hand on model of machine gun on table)

Today, this gun that Maurek makes is the best gun, and the king that has this gun is the conqueror. But who makes this king the conqueror? Is it not the man that makes the gun?

Carl

Yes.

Maurek

And who makes this gun?

Carl

Maurek.

Maurek

(Sitting)
Now, you have it. You understand that you must always keep that in your mind?

Carl

Yes.

Maurek

Remember, when the guns thunder it is Maurek who thunders. "It is Maurek who speaks," they will say in the battles. This is the name that the victors will shout. This is the name that shall be heard in the groans of the dying.

(Rises in mental frenzy)

In the last battle they went down to death—ten thousand went down to death at the breath of Maurek's guns.

Jan

(Standing in fascinated horror, glaring at Maurek, groans)
Oh, God!

Maurek

(Turning suddenly on Jan)
What is it that you said?

Jan

Oh, I know not what I said.

Maurek

(With deadly calm)
I have been hearing of you.
(To Carl)
This is the fellow you brought with you from home, is it not?

Carl

(Anxiously)
Yes, but you must not mind him. You may trust him.

Maurek

(Haughtily)
I do not have to trust him. When I meet a snake I put my heel on it.

Carl

I pray you not to think of Jan in that way.

Maurek

Jan? Yes, that's the name. I have been hearing of him.

Carl

He is faithful. I have known him all my life.

Maurek

That makes no difference. You may not know him now. I don't think you do. Let us see.

(To Jan)
Stand over here in the light, fellow, where I can see you better.

Jan

(Crossing to opposite Maurek)
Yes, sir.

Maurek

(To Jan)
Have you the courage to answer truthfully and frankly the questions I shall ask you?

Jan

Is that your wish?

Maurek

Answer "yes" or "no".

Jan

(Calmly—straightening)
Yes.

Maurek

(To Carl)
Now, listen. You may as well learn now, as at some other time, how to deal with this species of viper.
(To Jan)
Are you an anarchist?

Jan

No.

Maurek

Oh, well, you call yourself by a somewhat softer name. You are a socialist, eh?

Jan

No.

Maurek

You are a liar.

Jan

(Coolly)
No.

Maurek

You said you had the courage to answer me truthfully and frankly.

Jan

I have. And I am doing so.

Maurek

What do you believe, then?

Jan

There is much that I believe and much that I do not believe.

Maurek

(To Carl)
They have glib tongues, these fellows.
(To Jan)
Tell us what you do not believe.

Jan

It would take a year and a day.

Maurek

You are a word-juggler and a loafer.

Jan

I will, if I can, answer any question you put to me.

Maurek

Well, then, let us start with the main question. Do you believe in guns?

Jan

No.

Maurek

Ha! Now we have you in the open. Do you know what we do with traitors when we find them here?

Jan

I am no traitor.

Maurek

It is useless for you to cringe and beg off now that you are afraid.

Jan

(Smiling)
I am not afraid.

Maurek

But you shall be made to be so.

Jan

Not all Maurek's guns can make me so.

Maurek

(In outburst of anger)
So? Now, fellow, you have bared yourself and I know you in truth for what you are.
(Turning to Carl)
Drive this villain away from you. I have long suspected what he is.

Carl

(In deep distress)
Why—why—sir, it is but Jan.

Maurek

Let me tell you that you must learn to know the breed of this fellow. He is the kind that would destroy all thrones and power if he could.

Carl

Jan would not destroy anything.

Maurek

(To Jan)
Would you not destroy power if you could?

Jan

I would destroy the power of wrong, and I would gladly die to uphold the power of right.

Maurek

Would you not destroy kings?

Jan

(In exaltation)
Yes, every king that wears a crown I would destroy.

Maurek

(Turns fiercely upon Jan)
Away with you, serpent. Out of my sight, and let your face never be seen here again.

Carl

Surely, sir, your passion has blinded you. Jan is my faithful friend.

Maurek

(Madly, as he turns to do Jan violence)
I will strangle the traitorous breath out of your body where you stand.

Jan

(Springing back and grasping pike which he holds menacingly against Maurek)
Another step and you will never breathe the breath of life again. Move at your peril.

Maurek

(Falling back in some dismay)
See, the villain would assassinate me.

Jan

I do not want your blood on my hands—it is too foul. I shall leave you, but before I go there are words that I must speak. Tell me, who were these ten thousand men killed by your guns?

Maurek

Who were they? What does it matter? They were killed and it was Maurek's guns that killed them.

Jan

What of the mothers that bore them? What of the children left now without their care?

Maurek

Away with you. Out of my sight.

Jan

Answer me.

Maurek

(Sneering)
Answer you? Ho and are you the King?

Jan

Some day the King will answer, too.

Maurek

He will answer with guns—the guns of Maurek. Know you, that so long as there are kings there will be guns.

Jan

Ay, and when there are no kings there will be no guns.

Maurek

(Laughs derisively)
Fool, that day will never be.

Jan

Yes, that day will be as surely as that this day is now.
(Lowers pike)
Fear not me, Maurek. I shall not kill you. The day is coming soon enough when the world shall dread no longer either you or the bloody masters that you serve. God will gather his own toll and Hell itself will almost pity you when it sees the price you have to pay.

Maurek

(In great rage)
Am I to stand here in my own house and be lectured to by a mad fanatic and a menial?

Jan

(Calmly)
Maurek, listen to me. You have dominated your world, but your master draws near.

Maurek

My Master—Maurek's master?

Jan

Ay, even Maurek has a master.

Maurek

You lie.

Jan

No, I do not lie. Sooner or later he comes to lay you low. His name is Death.

Maurek

Fiend, do you think to kill me?

Jan

No—oh, no. Your conqueror will find you. He needs no aid from me or anyone. Prepare, Maurek, and pray God for mercy before it is too late.

Maurek

(Crosses tottering to the door)

Away with you. Out of my sight—out of my sight. I shall have you hanged like the dog you are.

(EXIT MAUREK)

(Carl crosses impulsively two or three steps towards door after Maurek, then stops, Jan watching him)

Jan

(Crossing to Carl and placing his hand gently on Carl's shoulder)

Come, laddie, this is no place for you. Let us go back again to the meadows and the trees and the singing river—and Lissa, your little sweetheart, who waits for you.

Carl

(Turns and slowly seats himself at table looking still towards door)

Ah, Jan, you have broken the golden cord. You must go now, and I shall be left alone here without a friend.

Jan

But why should you stay?

Carl

I must stay. There is no other way.

Jan

This is child's talk. Do not be a weakling, Carl. Put a little of all this iron that is here into your soul and we will take the road together—the white road that stretches over the Green Hill to the orchards and the fields of bloom.

Carl

No, no, it is too late now, Jan. I am bound to Maurek.

Jan

No man is bound to another man except he be a slave, and surely you are not that.

Carl

I am worse than a slave. I am helpless with the bond upon me.

Jan

It is not the bond that holds you, but tradition. Once in every thousand years God makes a man to burst some fetter that binds him and his fellow man. Stand up and be you now that man. The Clock of Time has just struck another thousand years.

Carl

Alas, Jan, I am not the man, nor is he here or anywhere today. The clock has not yet struck. You and I shall never hear it. Maurek is strong and we are weak.

Jan

Laddie, whoever is a slave is such because he is willing to be.

Carl

No, it is because there are those stronger.

Jan

Are you not strong?

Carl

Not strong enough to do what you would have me do.

Jan

Would you not like to set your feet again on the green pathways of home?

Carl

Had I the world I would give it to be there.

Jan

Then you have but to go.

Carl

They would seek me out and find me.

Jan

The world has many hiding places, and old Jan knows them all.

Carl

It is no use, Jan. The gyves are on my wrists. You are wise and you should know.

Jan

Would you not like to see Lissa again—Lissa who waits for you with dewy eyes in the twilight meadow?

Carl

(Heartbrokenly)
Speak not of Lissa. It is a dream that I must put away forever. Lissa is not for me—Lissa, oh, Lissa.
(Bows head on table)

Jan

(Come, laddie, come—Lissa is calling you)

(Carl still remains with bowed head. Jan goes to window and peers out anxiously for Otto, waves his hand to the distance, and, otherwise, in pantomine, makes it clear that he is endeavoring to attract the attention of Otto where he is hidden in the shrubbery. He makes it appear that his efforts are not successful. Turns and looks anxiously at Carl, then quietly slips from window)

(Carl rises and looks about the room, seeing that Jan has departed. Then crosses to door which he bolts from inside. Returns to table, opens drawer from which he takes pistol. Makes it appear that he is about to take his own life in his despair. Just then Otto's flute is heard playing softly under window. It is "Lebewohl," the

farewell song. Carl listens as though in a dream. Slowly puts pistol down on table. Then turns dazed toward window.)

(ENTER from WINDOW, OTTO with flute and sprays of peach blossoms that Judith has thrown out)

(RE-ENTER JAN from WINDOW closely following OTTO)

Carl

Otto!

Otto

Carl, Carl. See, I have brought you blossoms from the orchard fields at home.

(Otto presents blossoms to Carl. Carl takes blossoms in his hands and buries his face with bowed head in the sprays. Otto and Jan look on silently)

Carl

Did you come alone, Otto?

Otto

Yes. All the way alone—just to see you, Carl, and to take back with me some word from you.

Carl

Tell them I have not forgotten them and that I love them still.

Otto

Shall I say to Lissa that you love her still?

Carl

Lissa most of all—more than always. But I cannot go.

Otto

They are longing for you to come back. Will you never come again?

Carl

Don't you see, Otto, they have bound me here and I cannot break my chains.

Jan

Oh, boy, you have but one life to live. You can never be what Maurek would have you be—hell's hired man, making guns to slaughter innocent men.

Carl

I must go on. They will not let me escape. Oh, God help me.

Jan

Suppose some day the guns you make are turned upon the village where you were born—upon Otto, here,—and Lissa—and all those who dwell in that dear place and who love you with all their hearts.

Carl

(In horror)
That could never be.

Jan

It could well be. Maurek would do it without the quiver of a muscle.

Carl

They would find me and drag me back.

Jan

Then, refuse to do their bidding. Oh, laddie, I have watched you from your cradle. Go back with Otto and me to the old places again. Lissa calls you.

Carl

Does Lissa call me?

Otto

She dies for loneliness, Carl. If you do not come, we shall not have our Lissa long.

Carl

What can I do.

Jan

Go back and defy Maurek and them all to take you.

Carl

I would be as a hunted outlaw.

Jan

But Lissa would be with you.

Otto

Will you not come?

Jan

Yes, Otto. He is going back now—with you.

Carl

(Hesitatingly)
No, that can never be.

Jan

(Taking Carl gently by arm, picks up Carl's hat and gives it to him. Carl looks hesitatingly around the room and then impulsively throws his arm around Otto's shoulder)

Carl

Come, Otto. We will cross the Green Hill again and I shall look once more in Lissa's eyes, if it be only for an hour and that hour my last. Evening is falling but in the darkness we will find our way.

(EXIT CARL and OTTO through WINDOW)

(Jan shakes his head and laughts. Then goes to closet, takes out bundle which contains all his belongings, crosses back to table, picks up peach blossoms and, as he hums the melody of the farewell song, places sprays of blossoms in mouth of cannon on table. Then takes pike standing against wall, breaks blade from staff, slips bundle on end of staff and places staff over shoulder, looks about room happily and waves it a jaunty farewell)

(EXIT JAN through WINDOW)

(CURTAIN)

ACT III

SCENE—The scene of Act III is the same as Act I—the house of Rudolph and Babra. The surroundings, however, show some signs of neglect. The fence has fallen, the windows of the house are boarded up, and cross bars are nailed upon the door.

AT RISE—At rise Jan is seen coming from Back down the country road toward the house. He is attired exactly as he was seen at the close of Act II going out of the window in Maurek's office. He carries on his shoulder the pike staff with his kerchief bundle swinging at the end. He approaches the house and sits down on the doorstep wearily, mopping his brow as from a long, hard journey afoot. His clothes are dusty.

TIME—Two days after Act II.

(ENTER HEGG, strolling, and as though looking over a new, strange place)

Jan

(On seeing Hegg starts in surprise, rising somewhat excitedly. Makes movement as though to hide. Watches Hegg furtively and then suddenly decides to hail him)
Good morning, friend Hegg.

Hegg

(Startled)
Oh—it's **you**—is it?

Jan

(Coldly)
Yes—it is I—all right. Now, tell me, what are **you** doing here?

Hegg

Why, I took your advice and came out to have a look at the country.

Jan

(Suspiciously)
Are you **sure** that's the reason you came?

Hegg

(Innocently)
Of course. You talked me into it.

Jan

(Still suspicious)
Aren't you afraid you'll be discharged for running away from your job, like this?

Hegg

I am already discharged. And it all came about through you.

Jan

Hegg, I want to trust you, but I've got to know whether you are telling the truth or not.

Hegg

It's the truth, sure enough. I am out of a job and it's your fault.

Jan

How can that be?

Hegg

Oh, I don't want to think of it. It was terrible.

Jan

What was terrible?

Hegg

The way he treated me.

Jan

Who?

Hegg

Why, Maurek—Maurek, himself.

Jan

Go on and tell me. I don't understand.

Hegg

Oh, you understand well enough. I knew I'd get into trouble, loafing around the office with you and listening to your talk.

Jan

(Ominously)
Hegg, are you telling me the truth, or are you here as a spy, sent ahead by Maurek?

Hegg

Spy—me a spy for Maurek. No such luck. I wish I were.

Jan

You wish you were—a SPY?

Hegg

(Dejectedly)
Yes—anything, except being out of a job, like this.

Jan

I hope I can believe you. I have never killed anything or anybody yet, but I believe I could kill a spy.

Hegg

Well, I'm not one, so you needn't kill me.

Jan

But you said you wished you were one.

Hegg

One what?

Jan

A spy.

(Hegg shakes head, deprecatingly)

Now, Hegg, if it be true that you have lost your job in that great hell beyond our Green Hill, and you are here to see where you can set your foot on God's good, green ground and to turn yourself into a man—why, I shall love you. But— —

Hegg

(Wearily)

There's no "buts" about it. That's the truth.

Jan

Then, take back what you said?

Hegg

Take back what?

Jan

What you said—that you wished you were a spy.

Hegg

Why, that's a good job—a spy. Maurek has hordes of them.

Jan

Yes, and so has the King—and every king—and those whose deviltry hedge the kings in with swords and guns.

Hegg

They get good pay.

Jan

The pay they get is the same as Judas got. It is foul with filth and it reeks with the blood of the murder of men's souls and bodies.

Hegg

Why, what do they do—those spies?

Jan

They do everything that's low and dirty. They walk in your shadow. They crawl in moral sewers. They sneak upon you in your sleep. They betray the hand that feeds them and the roof that shelters them. They are the meanest things that crawl upon the earth.

Hegg

I didn't know that.

Jan

You know it now. Some day there will be no kings and then there will be no spies.

Hegg

I am not a spy.

Jan

I will believe you. Now, tell me why you were discharged.

Hegg

Well, when it became known that he was gone—your master, young Mr. Carl—I had the misfortune to go into Maurek's office with some papers and Maurek turned on me like a madman.

Jan

Did he blame you?

Hegg

He blamed me because of you.

Jan

Because we were friends, eh?

Hegg

Because you had worked on your master's feelings—made him homesick, and in that way unfitted him.

Jan

Fine! But what had you to do with it?

Hegg

The spies reported that I was in league with you.

Jan

(Shows himself to be much pleased. Rubs his hands in happy way and smiles)

For once the spies have done a man a good turn.

Hegg

They have?

Jan

Yes—and you are that man.

Hegg

They lost me my job.

Jan

And now you are come to the country to set up your nine bean rows and the hives for the honey bee.

(Reaches out his hand to Hegg)

Welcome, O brother—welcome to the singing waters and the dewy grass. I salute you, Hegg!

Hegg

(Uneasily)

But, listen.

(Looks all around)

Maurek swears he will come here and drag young Carl back.

Jan

(Distressed)

He does?

Hegg

Yes—and that's not all. He swears also that he will strangle you with his own hands.

Jan

(Laughing)
Poor Maurek.

Hegg

Man, are you not frightened?

Jan

Not the least. Go your way, Hegg. Look about you. You will have friends here. Ask for the house of Otto, the flute player.

Hegg

I will see you again?

Jan

Never fear. Go now.
(EXIT HEGG)
(Jan resumes seat on cottage steps)
(Sounds of singing heard in distance)
(ENTER NESPIE and VILLAGE FOLK)

Nespie

(Seeing Jan)
Oh, Jan, welcome home again. You have come back with the flowers of the Springtime.
(Village folk crowd about Jan in noisy welcome.)

Jan

(Who has crossed to meet Nespie and village folk)
You are happy as ever, Nespie.

Nespie

Of course, who would not be happy in the Springtime.
(Takes Jan's hands)
Come, Jan—come and dance with us.
(Village folk join in invitation to Jan to dance with them)

Jan

I am too tired. I have been walking many a weary mile.

Nespie

Where have you been this whole year?

Jan

I have been where I did not want to be, in the smoke and roar of the great city.

Nespie

And where is Carl? Why did you leave him behind you?

Jan

I was homesick for the green fields and the flowers.

Nespie

(Ruefully)
But where is Carl. Will he come back to us no more?

Jan

Perhaps—some day.

Nespie

But why did you not bring him with you now, Jan?

Jan

(Smiling)
Well, you see, Nespie, I have not the power to order people about—to make them come and go at my will. And, besides, everybody is not as I am, Nespie. They are not free to come and go as I am.

Nespie

Oh, and will they not let Carl come home again? Don't they know that we want him back?

Jan

That would not make any difference to them—that you want him back. They would not care about that.

Nespie

But Lissa wants him, too, Jan. Don't they know that Lissa wants him?

Jan

Has Lissa told you that she wants Carl back?

Nespie

No—she has not told us—but we know.

Jan

How do you know, Nespie?

Nespie

Because she is very sad and no longer gay and happy as she used to be. She does not smile or laugh any more. She never dances with us now. And she never sings.

Jan

What! Lissa never sings?

Nespie

No, she never sings, nor laughs, nor dances any more. Why did you not bring Carl back with you, Jan? Has he forgotten us?
Has he forgotten Lissa?

Jan

He has not forgotten you, Nespie, nor anyone here—and Lissa least of all.

Nespie

Then why does he not come home?
(Jan shakes head sadly)
Go, Jan. Go back to the great city over our Green Hill and bring Carl back to us and to Lissa.

Jan

Carl has great work to do.

Nespie

Yes, but does he not know that the peach trees are in blossom and that the yellow flowers are in the grass, and that our river sings again?

Jan

(Gently)

How could he know all that in the great, noisy, dirty city where the river does not sing and there are no meadows or yellow flowers in the grass?

Nespie

Then you must go back and tell him. Go back, Jan—go back and bring Carl home to us again—to us and Lissa. Will you not do so?

Jan

Do not speak of it any more, Nespie. Dance for me. Dance again the dance of the Springtime.

Nespie

(Turning to her companions)

Come, let us dance for Jan—the dance of the Springtime that he loves the best.

(Village folk dance the dance of the Springtime and at its conclusion EXIT singing and dancing as they go, leaving Jan again sitting on the doorstep of Rudolph's house)

ENTER RUDOLPH and BABRA. They make their entrance as though arriving from a hurried and distracted journey. RUDOLPH appears first, excited and flustered. Poor BABRA follows in a frightened and dejected manner)

Rudolph

(Seeing Jan, who sits lazily on the steps of the house as though in a dream)

Here you are, villain. Where is Carl? Where is my boy?

(Shakes his fist furiously at Jan)

You have made a pretty muss of it. Maurek will have your life. Tell me, scoundrel, tell me—where is my boy?

Babra

(Sitting wearily on rustic bench)

Oh, would that we had never left this pleasant place.

Rudolph

(Turning upon Babra furiously)

Hold your peace, woman.

(Turns to Jan again)

Where is he, I say. Where is Carl?

Jan

(Coolly)

Have a care of yourself, Rudolph. You are like to have a fit of apoplexy. The veins in your neck are too thick. The flesh pots have made you fat. Sit down in the shade and calm yourself.

Rudolph

I will sit in no shade or sun, until I have found my boy. Where have you hidden him?

Jan

Go into the house, Rudolph, and let the sunshine follow you.

Babra

(Rises excitedly. Speaks to Jan)
Oh, is Carl in the house?

Jan

Maybe, I do not know if he be there or somewhere else.

Rudolph

(Tearing cross bars from door)
If he be here I shall find him.
(To Jan)
Villain! Maurek will have your life.
(EXIT RUDOLPH into the HOUSE. He pushes door in with his shoulder)

Babra

(Crossing to house)
Let me find my boy.

Jan

(Leads Babra gently back to rustic bench)
Sit down, Babra, let Rudolph go through the house. It ought to do him good.

Babra

Is Carl there?

Jan

(Shaking his head smilingly)
I do not think he is there, Babra.

Babra

Then where is he? Oh, dear Jan, tell me. Where is Carl?

Jan

Wherever he be, Babra, he is in the hands of his fate or wherever your prayers would put him.

Babra

I pray the saints that he is safe.

Jan

The saints are good caretakers, Babra. Keep them busy with your prayers. But, tell me, Babra, what is all this fuss about?

Babra

Do you not know? Did you not take Carl away with you?

Jan

Tell me what has happened.

Babra

Oh, Jan, it was very terrible. When no one could find Carl there was a great uproar. Maurek and Judith came to our house, and I thought they would tear down the very walls on our heads.

Jan

Who was first to find that Carl had gone?

Babra

It was Judith.

Jan

(Smiling)
Ah, yes, I remember. I was to have him leave his office promptly at five o'clock, see that he was arrayed in his purple and fine linen and then he was to call for the lady.

Babra

Judith waited an hour for him and then she made a great fuss.

Jan

She waited an hour? I am surprised that she waited more than a minute. The Lady Judith is not used to waiting for time or tide or any man. But, go on, Babra—what happened then?

Babra

Oh, everything happened then. We spent a terrible night and another day in fear and trembling. Then Maurek and Judith ordered us to return here. They were very angry.

Jan

I am sure you are glad to be back, Babra. Does it not feel good to be in the old place again? I'll warrant you'll feel better when you get out of that stuffy city gown and into your old home clothes again.

Babra

I always wanted to come back but now what use is it? Carl is gone—or dead. The world is turned upside down.
(Babra weeps and sobs)

Jan

(Crossing stealthily and gently to Babra, placing his hand on her shoulder)
Do not weep, Babra. Carl is not dead.

Babra

(Looking up with sudden joy)
He is not dead? Then where is he?

Jan

(Smiling)
The saints have him in their care, Babra.

Babra

(Piteously)

Oh, Jan, wherever he be, do you protect him. I fear that Maurek will kill him when he finds him.

Jan

And he is also to kill me, you say?

Babra

Yes, I fear he will kill us all.

Jan

No, Babra—he has not guns enough, nor wheels of iron to do that. Where is Maurek now?

Babra

He is coming here. Fly for your life, Jan. Fly away and hide.

(RE-ENTER RUDOLPH from the HOUSE)

Rudolph

There is no one in the house. Where can the boy be?

(Turns to Jan)

Scoundrel, have you killed him?

(Rudolph crosses as though to go down the road when he suddenly stops at sight of the approach of Maurek)

Ha! Yonder comes Maurek.

(To Jan)

Now, villain, you shall get your desserts.

Babra

(Looking into distance and turning to Jan pleadingly)

Fly, Jan. Fly for your life, I beg of you. Maurek will kill you. Run, Jan, run.

Jan

(Quietly)

Do not fear, Babra. I shall not run. We shall see what the great Maurek has to say to us.

(ENTER MAUREK)

Rudolph

(Crossing as though to assist Maurek who half-totters to seat on rustic bench)

He is not here, Maurek—he is not here.

Maurek

(Wrathfully)

Out of my sight. Away with you.

Rudolph

(Turning to Jan)

Here he is. Here is the villain who has broken up our world.

Maurek

(Turning slowly upon Jan and fixing him with a burning, mad stare, speaking in a voice of deliberate and terrible anger)

So, dog, and you are here. Where is this boy that you have lured away?

Jan

(Quietly)
Wherever he be, I trust he is safe from you, Maurek.

Maurek

He is not safe from me unless he shall instantly make great amends.

Jan

You mean he must go back with you to the world and your iron wheels and the guns, beyond the Green Hill?

Maurek

That do I mean and that he shall do.

Jan

Have you not had enough of power, Maurek, without crushing this poor, country lad?

Maurek

Would that I had the strength this minute to tear you limb from limb.

Jan

(Smiling)
I would rather wait till I had wandered farther. There is many a forest and wild meadow and running river that I have yet to see.

Maurek

You have seen your last wild meadow, for I shall close upon you with the very power of the King and you shall die like the dog you are between the narrow walls of a prison cell.

Jan

What have I done, Maurek?

Maurek

(With rising passion)
What have you done? Dog, you have upset my world.

Jan

Is Maurek's world so uncertain, then, that a dog can upset it?

Maurek

Dare you taunt me?

Jan

No, Maurek—God forbid that I should taunt even you. It is not worth while and life is too brief for that, even though you would, as you say, tear me limb from limb.

Maurek

(In pathetic show of weakness, passes his hand over his dry lips. Turns pleadingly to Jan)
Where is the boy? Bring him back to me and go your way.

Jan

You have enough, Maurek, without that.

Maurek

But what is he to you?

Jan

He is everything to me—a friend. I have rocked him in his cradle, and it was I who taught his uncertain baby feet to trudge their first little steps. I love him and I would die for him as I would die for any friend.

Maurek

You love him, you say? Then why would you stand in his way? Was he not to be great and rich and powerful and strong? Was he not to see kings to grovel at his feet? Was he not to be another Maurek, greater even than I?

Jan

No, he was not to be that because God did not make him so. He never killed a worm. Not you nor all the insidious cunning of devils could have kept this boy standing in your place making guns and still more guns to hurl to death his helpless fellow creatures whom he never knew and who never did him harm. It is not I who have robbed you of the boy, but God.

Maurek

And is the house of Maurek to crumble when death crumbles me?

Jan

Let us pray for that. Yours is the art that makes the gun, Maurek. Would to God that the art could die with the man.

Maurek

(Again seized with the senseless rage in his one great mania of life, rises)
No—no—no. It shall not be. Never shall the voice of Maurek die. In the battles' thunder they shall hear him speak—In the shouts of the victors and in the groans of the dying they shall hear the guns of Maurek pealing like the clap of doom.
(In a tottering frenzy, shrieking)
Bring me the guns. Up, up to the parapets with the guns of Maurek. Gather around them, kings and captains. Ah! see their tongues of fire leaping from their iron throats. Boom—boom—listen to their voice of thunder. Look—look—see them perish in the fields below, hundreds, thousands, reeling, falling, shattered, torn to shreds and piled in bloody heaps, the slain upon the slain, with the voice of Maurek in their ears. Bring me the guns—bring me the guns—
(He rises and totters. Jan and Rudolph cross quickly and catch

him in their arms. They hold him for a moment as he lies limp and still. Then they solemnly carry him into the house. Babra follows, weeping and horrified)

(EXIT JAN, RUDOLPH and BABRA)

(ENTER OTTO, stealthily but joyously. Motions with his hand to the distance)

(ENTER CARL and LISSA)

Otto

(To Carl and Lissa)
There is no one here.

Lissa

But there is something wrong. The place is as still as death.

Carl

Be not afraid, Lissa. Do not let your fears possess you.

Lissa

I feel that we are in the presence of doom. Oh, Carl, Carl what evil fate has fallen upon us?

(She buries her head on Carl's bosom. Carl folds her in his arms)

(RE-ENTER JAN from the HOUSE)

Otto

(Excitedly)
Oh, Jan, is all well?

Jan

(Solemnly)
Yes, Otto—all is well.

(Crosses to Carl and Lissa, placing hand on Carl's shoulder)
Look up, my lad, the world is free for you again.

Lissa

(Looking up with sudden hope)
Free? Carl is free again, you say?

Jan

Yes. He has come back to you, Lissa, and there is now no power that can take him away.

Carl

(Wonderingly)
Why—why—what has happened, Jan?

Jan

Maurek is dead.

Carl

(Electrified)
Maurek dead? How—where?

Jan

It was his time—marked down in the Great Book—he could not evade it nor put it off one instant longer with all his guns, and all

his wealth and power. Inside that quiet house Maurek lies cold and still. He shall hear in his ears no more the thunder of the guns. The voice that shall speak in some new Paardeburg or upon some new red height of Sedan shall not be Maurek's voice. His name shall be spoken no more on dying lips, nor shall victors shout his glory, nor shall they curse him who tumble down headlong to gory death. His day is done his hour is sped.

(Otto, Carl and Lissa stand awed with bowed heads and, as Jan finishes, they cross themselves devoutly)

Otto

God rest his soul.

Jan

Amen.

(Turning to Carl)

Go into the house and look upon his pallid face and see how weak are now his nerveless hands. The bond is broken, laddie, and you are free.

(EXIT into the HOUSE, OTTO, CARL, and LISSA in awed and solemn manner)

(Jan crosses to step of house, picks up his bundle and pike staff, spins the staff and bundle across his shoulder and crosses and disappears down the country road.

(EXIT JAN)

(CURTAIN)

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